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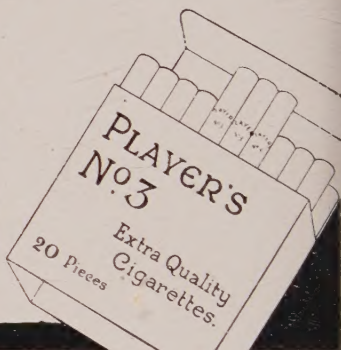
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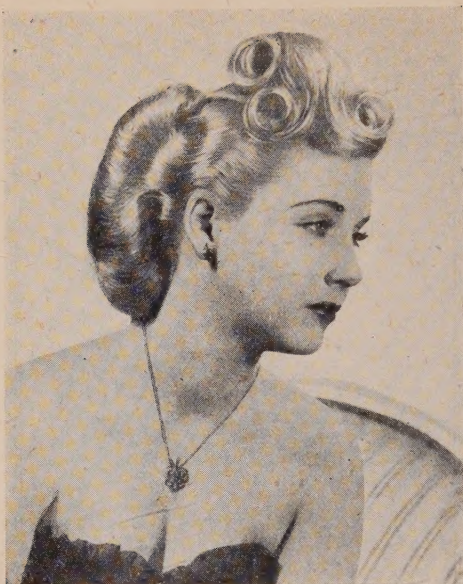
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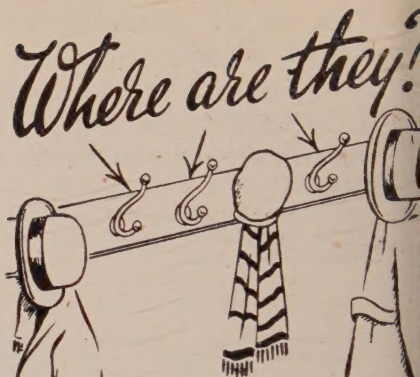
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THEATRE WORLD



Picture by Angus McBean

Anticipating "Sweetest and Lowest"

An amusing new composite study of HERMIONE GINGOLD, who will star with Henry Kendall again in *Sweetest and Lowest*, the third and completely new edition of J. W. Amberton's famous Ambassadors revue. The first night is on May 9th, and author Alan Melville is said to have supplied the inimitable Gingold with a host of new opportunities. This Angus McBean impression shows Miss Gingold in the sweetest and lowest light: the hands surrounding the faces are also hers, and the celebrated bracelet of gold charms which she always wears figures in the picture.



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Edited by Frances Stephens

May, 1946

Over the Footlights

THE past few weeks have been notable for some interesting theatrical events in the West End. There have been two new ballets at Covent Garden; Robert Helpmann's *Adam Zero* and Frederick Ashton's *Symphonic Variations*, and the brilliant first Sadler's Wells Company's season at the Opera House is being extended to May 25th. The second ballet company (Sadler's Wells Opera-Ballet) has been inaugurated with great enthusiasm at Sadler's Wells Theatre. (News also comes, incidentally, that the Ballet Rambert will be at Sadler's Wells on July 1st for a six weeks' season.) London in addition has had the opportunity of seeing at the Adelphi Theatre the scintillating Ballets des Champs Elysées, paying their first visit to this country.

Then our one and only Beatrice Lillie is back again, and there could be no doubt about the welcome home. It is good to think that the blandishments of Broadway would not prevail, and that Miss Lillie will delight London audiences again after far too long an absence. *Better Late* was produced at the Garrick too late for review this month.

The Stratford Festival, under the new director, Sir Barry Jackson, opened at Easter in brilliant Spring weather. Much comment seems to be forthcoming in connection with the new regime. The question of the stars and their salaries for instance has been given a national airing. These are probably the growing pains of a new order on the Avon; at least no hint of mug complacency could exist under these persistent probings.

When this is in print the Old Vic Company will have left for New York. From news reaching us from America it would seem that the company's fame has gone be-

fore them. Though tickets were not on sale until May 1st, weeks before that date practically all the seats for the entire six weeks' season had been booked through the post. We understand that the prices of seats are the highest ever for a non-musical on Broadway.

The exchange is complete, for Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* has settled in at the New and from all accounts of the pre-London tour, this is an American offering not to be missed.

May will bring another distinguished production in Rodney Ackland's new dramatisation of *Crime and Punishment*, starring Dame Edith Evans, John Gielgud and Peter Ustinov. The play opens a month's tour at Manchester on May 20th before coming to London.

Produced too late for review this month was the new Palladium musical, *High Time*, with Tessie O'Shea, Nat Jackley, Jewel and Warriss and Halama and Konarski; a gay and colourful affair well worthy to follow the eighteen months of the successful Tommy Trinder show *Happy and Glorious*. It seems odd to see the name of "Parnell" instead of "Black" on the programme, but George Black's influence patently still lives on.

The actors of the Reunion Theatre Association have called forth great praise following their production of a new play by "T. Atkinson" entitled *Exercise "Bowler"* at the Arts Theatre. This thought provoking and unusual play will be reviewed next month. There are ample signs that, particularly among our younger actors and playwrights returning from the forces and from prisoner-of-war camps, there is a new vitality and a fresh approach to the theatre.

F.S.

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New Shows of the Month

"The Wise Have Not Spoken"—Kings, Hammersmith, March 19th.

"Murder on the Nile"—Ambassadors, March 19th.

"Make it a Date"—Duchess, March 20th.

"All This is Ended"—Granville, March 21st.

"Face of Coal"—Scala, March 26th.

"The Governess"—Embassy, March 26th.

"The Astonished Ostrich"—St. James's, April 9th.

"Man and Superman"—Kings, Hammersmith, April 9th.

"Patricia's Seven Houses"—Granville, April 10th.

"Here Come the Boys"—Saville, April 11th.

Sadler's Wells Opera-Ballet—Sadler's Wells, April 8th.

"The Wise Have Not Spoken"

SELDOM do we see a new play of the quality of Paul Vincent Carroll's *The Wise Have Not Spoken*. This author's name has become a sign for new ideas and good writing in the dramatic sphere and here is another proof that the English theatre will always be worthy of respect whilst there are Irishmen to write for it. Once again Mr. Carroll is occupied with the eternal conflict between Matter and Spirit, expressed in the characters and actions of a small group of people who live for us from the moment when we first behold them. They are men and women, each possessed of an idea that seems to them good, a secret, incommunicable faith, to which they will, under pressure, sacrifice everything else, even life itself. The play has action, shape and form; it answers itself; it is balanced and just. The story concerns the decay of the farm of the MacElroys on the outskirts of Dundalk and must be dated after the Spanish War, since the chief character was wounded in Spain, and before 1940, since Irish farms have not decayed since that date. Madness, death and emigration take away the farm workers one by one, until Francis, the Spanish veteran, and his young sister, Una, are the only survivors. The farm is being auctioned by order of the mortgagees and the MacElroys are called upon to quit. Francis has always scorned to work the farm in a capitalist country but he now refuses to leave it and dies in its defence. Basil C. Langton as Francis gives a powerful and thrilling performance. The changing moods of Una are convincingly and sympathetically conveyed by the ever changing expression and the changing light in the eyes of Renee Asherson, who speaks the closing lines, ending the play on a note of faithfulness and courage. Other excellent performances were given by Lewis Casson,

Alan Judd, Stanford Holme and Ann Casson. H.G.M.

"Murder on the Nile"

THERE is an air of artlessness about this new Agatha Christie thriller which deprives it of some grip or zest, but some of the weakness must be laid to faulty construction. Too much of Acts I and II is devoted to the assembly of a mixed, unlikely group of characters on this Nile steamer; only the last act develops speed and movement. Then the author distributes her clues in such a way that the solution, in the hands of a rather improbable priest, is more explanatory than dramatic. Throughout the play the company give an impression that they are never quite reconciled to their setting in time and place.

David Horne, that good actor who has played many clergymen in his time, on this occasion has to portray a blend of detective and business man. The combination has an unreality in clerical cloth, but no actor could do more for his author. Vivienne Bennett gives a vivid performance as the discarded fiancée, with Helen Hays and Joanna Derrill filling in the feminine interest as the aunt and niece on an Egyptian tour.

Ivan Brandt is the young husband caught between two feminine fires; Ronald Millar is most pleasantly in the picture with a young peer whose communist anonymity deceives few. Hugo Schuster's oriental doctor is well done, and a word must be said for Danae Gayler's setting. F.J.D.

"Make it a Date"

THE advent of this bright intimate revue emphasised how lacking the West End has been of late in this type of entertainment. It is obviously not so easy to "pull it off," and perhaps managements hesitate to enter the lists against the brilliant Ambassadors offerings. But London can easily accommodate more than one good revue of this kind.

The company is fortunate in having an outstanding comedian in Max Wall, almost matched by the unusual talent of comedienne Avril Angers. These two are revue artists of the first water. But it is invidious to pick out individuals from a team which work brilliantly as one; Marianne Davis and Leigh Stafford (of "Edmar," who present the show), Billy Leonard, Helen Goss and Terence Delaney particularly are in good form. The material supplied by Nina Warner Hooke, Ronald Jeans and Reginald Purdell is well above the average. F.S.

"Red Roses for Me"

Kieron O'Hanrahan and Maureen Pook in Sean O'Casey's play, which made a deep impression when it was produced at the Embassy, and when subsequently transferred to the Lyric, Hammer-smith, on April 9th for a short season. (Picture by Bunyard-Ader.)

"All This is Ended"

ALL *This is Ended* by Jack Alldridge is an entirely ex-Service production; author, producer, designer and all the cast are but recently demobilised. Originally produced in Naples with a Service cast the play toured Italy and Greece playing to Service audiences. It may be regarded, then, as a true reflection of the soldier's point of view. This, in the words of more than one character in the play, may be briefly expressed, "It mustn't 'appen agen." One might suppose that after every war this has been said. This play will help to strengthen the resolve but it is past the wit of any playwright to show how the resolve may be put into effect.

One of the characters, the youngest and weakest, is sent back to Earth from the Dead but he is no reformer and is concerned with his girl and her unborn baby to the exclusion of everything else. All the characters in the play are soldiers newly dead. Any play about the newly dead gradually realising that "they have had it" inevitably recalls memories of *Outward Bound*, whose author has never yet been surpassed in the handling of this no longer novel situation, and it is difficult for a new author to do more.

The play has a good ending and is well acted throughout. Hector Ross is a gifted actor, who easily holds attention throughout some long speeches which sometimes seem to have little bearing upon the theme of the play and David Stringer deserves praise for his artistically controlled rendering of a difficult part.

H.G.M.

"Face of Coal"

IT is the nature of a documentary play to be propagandist and this renders it suspect by the serious and avoided by the frivolous. Such a documentary play as *Face of Coal* by Jack Lindsay and B. L. Coombs should be financially supported by the Government and attendance at performances should be free, if not compulsory, as church attendance was in the Middle Ages. It is of the utmost importance that as many people as possible see this play but it is hardly fair to anyone that it should have to compete with entertainment theatres. While, at the Scala, we are being given the facts about the coal industry in this country, our interest is absorbed. When the love element is perfunctorily introduced we wait for it to be over.

It is asserted by some that Galsworthy did this sort of thing better. So he did,



but we have not got a Galsworthy now. Meanwhile, the documentary play is an improvement on the lecture, but at what a cost!

In the long cast Jean Shephard, Beatrice Rowe, Arthur Hambling and Bernard Miles were outstanding for clarity, sincerity and convincing characterisation.

H.G.M.

"The Governess"

TWO things are responsible for Patrick Hamilton's new play failing to grip an audience with that sustained tenseness which was the dramatist's intention. First, showing in a prologue the identity of the child stealer, and following that disclosure with verbose, repetitive acts in which the denouement happens either too slowly or too conveniently.

This story of frustration in a Victorian governess is, or could be, strong theatre. It has the ingredients. Given a good-looking governess who can bandy kisses with her employer while stealing his baby son to satisfy a thwarted instinct against his colourless wife, who can ill-treat the daughter with sadistic domination, and one may expect from this author some sound drama. Instead, it is difficult to avoid the misplaced laugh. To the obvious in construction has been added the trite or repetitive in dialogue. The sleep walking scene in the last act has a Victorian convenience in timing



Alexander Bender

EILEEN HERLIE

starring with Sebastian Shaw and John Justin in *The Thracian Horses*, a new comedy by Maurice J. Valency, which, directed by Norman Marshall, opens at the Lyric, Hammersmith, on May 7th for a limited season.

which is a test of politeness for an audience's acceptance to-day.

Gillian Lind is Ethel Fry, the insane governess. (Seldom leaving the stage, she plays the part in the broad and rather grand manner which is an authentic reading. So far as her author permits, it is a satisfying and even thrilling performance. Dorothy Gordon gives a queer intensity to the sleep-walking, chattering pupil. Campbell Cotts is excellent as the employer, irresistible force in the city, yielding clay to Miss Fry. Milton Rosmer does all that is possible with the police inspector, but his verbosity does become a little tiresome.

F.J.D.

"The Astonished Ostrich"

MORE astonishing than the ostrich is the fact that this play by Archie N. Menzies should be allowed to occupy the boards of a West-End theatre when masterpieces like *Red Roses for Me* are kept marking time in the suburbs. The conception is good. The leading characters are a gay bachelor and his illegitimate son, whose mother happens to be wife to the bachelor's valet. Finally, there is the glamorous actress who takes up residence in the bachelor's flat now and again to ward off melancholia. They are all potentially comic figures. In theory, they should make an entertaining evening, especially played by Basil Radford, Walter Fitzgerald and Judy Kelly, all experienced players who know how to get the last ounce out of their lines. Yet, about the middle of the second act,

when the comedy should have been at its brightest, my companion lost interest sufficiently to whisper in my ear, "Do you like the set?" and a few moments later I heard a lady behind me murmur to her friend, "Do you like Judy Kelly's hair-do?" So it seems that I am not the only one who felt the play had misfired, as light comedies usually do when played as farces. Still, the Mayfair setting was restful to the eye, and Judy Kelly's hair-style was most becoming. Jennifer Muir, Isola Strong and Alan Welch completed the cast of the play, which was produced by Reginald Tate.

E.J.

"Man and Superman"

THIS classic ought to be revived at least once every decade. The two excellences in the present revival are the way in which the general company rise to Tanner, thereby giving him support as a credible human being and not simply as the mouth-piece of the author, and the human appeal of Ann Whitefield as played by Ann Casson. It is two results of the same approach; a general humanising of a comedy that is sometimes presented as a mere display of dialectical fireworks. Another example of this same treatment is the excellent effect of getting Henry Straker played by so fine an actor as Esmond Knight. Often Octavius Robinson's remark about Straker is too apt, "I see nothing new about him, except your way of chaffing him," but when Esmond Knight plays Straker the New Man, that remark is but another proof of the obtuseness of Octavius. This Octavius (Michael Goodliffe) was not simply the romantic poor fish but a gorgeous ninny. He was unashamedly and extravagantly ridiculous and was loudly and repeatedly applauded. This figure of farce is either what Mr. Shaw wanted or it serves him right.

Roeback Ramsden, as one would expect from Lewis Casson, was a very eminent Victorian indeed and one almost caught one's breath at some of Tanner's remarks to him. It was like being rude to Mr. Gladstone. Shaw's "elegant and exquisitely pretty" Violet was also "proud and forward as presuming upon the merit of chastity." Her scene with old Malone was a delicious passage of comedy. Her husband, young Malone, came to life in John McKelvey's presentation. He faced up to the high absurdity of his lines and carried them off with flying colours.

Basil Langton's Tanner was a great triumph, the greater for not being of the obvious order. He sacrificed none of the author's points, yet remained a member of a team. Certainly the human quality of the Ann and Tanner affair was the chief excellence of the production. H.G.M.

(Continued on page 31)

Adam Zero

THE NEW ROBERT HELPMANN BALLET

by Audrey Williamson

TO Robert Helpmann has fallen the distinction of being the first English choreographer of our time to create a ballet at Covent Garden, and no new work could have more significantly matched the occasion than his *Adam Zero*, produced at the Opera House on April 10th. For this ballet not only carries one stage further the progress of English ballet along new lines of choreographic thought and creation, it also makes bold and imaginative use of all the mechanical resources of that great and lavishly equipped stage.

Adam Zero is an allegory, told, as the modern American play *The Skin of Our Teeth* was told, in terms of a theatrical



ROBERT HELPMANN

as Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty*

(Picture by Edward Mandinian)

performance in which the illusional devices of the stage are stripped bare to the eyes of the audience, and the play or ballet is built up before us in an atmosphere which is an exciting blend of rehearsal, creative composition and artistic completion. The method is not new in the theatre—in its simplest form it exists in the centuries-old theatre of China—but Helpmann's adaptation of it to ballet is free and original, and is parallel of the cycle of man's life from birth to death with the creation of a new ballet in the theatre is achieved with an emotional cogency and pliability of design that are equally remarkable.

It is impossible to capture in words the

spellbinding poignancy of this symbol of contemporary man, born, as a ballet is born, in the stress and toil of an empty theatre; dancing through the lyric and primitive Spring of life to the triumphant classic splendour of Summer's heat; touched by the first chill of Autumn and the fateful application of the make-up box that heralds old age; superseded by the younger generation who is both son and understudy; caught up in the mad degeneracy of the jazz-age that mocked and danced as the world flared into destruction; finally crawling through the bleak Winter of our Belsens to the protective arms of Death. It is marked by subtle touches that reinforce yet, by some magic, never overcrowd the theme, from the cut skein of life of the man's three Fates (Designer, Wardrobe Mistress and Dresser), and the sleeping Church to whom he turns unavailingly for solace, to the appearance of his son and daughter (a bitter comment on the brotherhood of man) as guards in the Belsen scene. Nothing in Helpmann's own performance has more pathos than the eager, unrealising joy with which, as the young Adam, he takes from the Fates the first discarded strand of his life, or in old age his slow shuffle on his knees to the Priest and feeble attempt to rub out with one shaking finger the last chalked zero on the blackboard of his life. The ballet has a magnificent inevitability of plan and design for which the scenarist, Major Michael Benthall, must be held responsible; even the "election" parody, which seems irrelevant, falls into place when the rags of the starved in Belsen repeat the symbol "Vote for Adam Zero," and the terrible harvest of modern politics is laid bare. And the theme of the nothingness of man's individual life is rounded off with a less unhopeful sense of the continuity of life as a whole; the wheel comes full circle, and on the empty stage with its watchful dancers we witness a recapitulation and a new birth.

The ballet is brought to life by a striking correlation of design, music; stage production and dance forms. The lighting, beautiful throughout, throws into relief both Helpmann's choreography and Roger Furse's designs, most notably in the jazz scene, which with its intoxicating rhythms and leaping flames has a quality almost demoniac, and the scene of "Spring" where the colours are exquisitely blended. The cyclorama is nowhere more impressive than when it stretches, an endless wintry wasteland, behind the scarlet-cloaked figure of Death, and Helpmann's dance arrangement fully exploits the pity and the majesty, as

(Continued overleaf)

well as the visual beauty, of this scene in which Death enfolds the dying man in arms like wings of enveloping flame. Using every dance convention, primitive, acrobatic, modern and classic, Helpmann has achieved a choreographic pattern that coincides with the heights and depths of civilised life. The difficult scenes of the birth and concentration camp are arranged with eloquent restraint, the birth scene attaining an extraordinary sense of the miracle of life through the mother's pain. The revelation of the naked man-child, Adam, in the compact position of a baby at birth, is strangely impressive, and the abounding energy and grace of his youth revealed in choreography that includes virile "lifts" and a sensational leap from the rostrum on to the outstretched arms of the youths beneath. The "Marriage" scene that follows is perhaps the loveliest in the ballet; perfect in musicality and pattern, it has a Spring-like tenderness and religious awe, and a use of "lift" and embrace that transposes erotic feeling on to a purely poetic plane. Musically this is Helpmann's most complex and brilliant ballet; his use of dancers at barre and practice in the opening scene shows a varied rhythmic undulation and "line" that can only be compared to orchestral harmony, and in the classical scene, the highest artistic form of the dance matching the high summer of a man's life, contrapuntal

timing gives a new effect to Petipa-like "dives" and piquettes. Arthur Bliss's music, rich in colour and texture, gives dramatic beauty to the whole, and one's only criticism is that the jazz scene and Dance of Death are both a trifle over-long.

Helpmann as Adam progresses superbly from the golden vitality and charm of youth to the wasted martyrdom of age; if one would single out any one moment in his performance it is the expression on his face when the costume of the dancer is snatched from him, and the hard strokes of the Stage Director's chalk put the first grey in his hair. There is prevision here, and a helpless pathos as he moves slowly back-stage with his cat in his arms. Pauline Clayden, supply acrobatic and affectionate, is delicious as the Cat, and Gillian Lynne as the Daughter, Leslie Edwards as the Priest and David Paltenghi as the Stage Director (an unobtrusive but perfect performance that is invaluable to the ballet) are ideally cast. Throughout the ballet woman is both Creator and Destroyer, Choreographer, Wife, Mistress and Death. June Brae, returning to the stage after four years' absence, plays all parts with an artistry that ranges easily from the lyric to the seductive and awe-inspiring. Only in the classical scene does she fail, and this is at the moment understandable. It is a pity an artist of such poetry is not to be attached permanently at Covent Garden.

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Cecil Truncer as Lloyd Hartley, M.A., and Edith Sharpe as Mrs. Hartley in a scene from Act 1, set in Hartley's study, Saintbury School, Christmas Term, 1944.

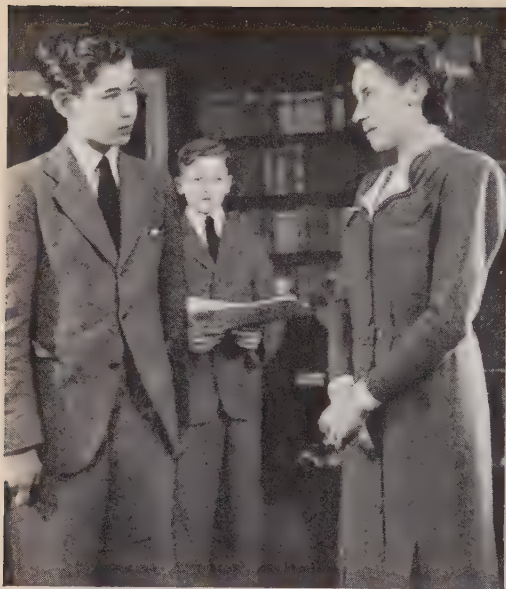
"The Guinea-Pig"

AT THE CRITERION

THIS new play by Warren Chetham Strode has been one of the most satisfying offerings in the West End of recent months. The play poses the problem of the scholarship boy of humble parentage who is sent to a famous public school. In this case, after much trial and error, the experiment succeeds, but the author leaves us with a

query in our minds and still with the right to our own opinion, which after all is perhaps the real function of a good play. The characterisation is excellent: there is humour in plenty, and the background of an ancient English public school is most faithfully conveyed. The play, which is presented by H. M. Tennent Ltd., is directed by Jack Minster with decor by Moira Verschoyle.

PICTURES BY JOHN VICKERS



Mrs. Hartley : Doesn't your mother want you to try for a scholarship? *Knox* : Yes, Mrs. Hartley. Mrs. Hartley has a kindly word with one of the boys. (Roger Braban as Knox and George Bryden as Fitch.)



Lynne : What's happened? . . . Yes . . . it s—it's the same for both of us. Lynne Hartley (Rachael Gurney) hears that her fiancé has been killed in an air accident in America.



Read : Grimmett said you wanted me. *Hartley* : Come in . . . shut the door. Mr. Hartley, who has been prejudiced since the beginning against the experiment of having in his House the scholarship boy, Read, sends for the boy after persistent complaint about his unruly behaviour. However, nothing comes of the interview for it is obvious that the housemaster has no intention of trying to understand the situation. (Derek Blomfield as Read and right Robert Flemyng as Nigel Lorraine, the new master.)

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the War

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The other
bursaries.



Saintbury's new Headmaster has a word with Hartley about the proposed War Memorial. There is some divergence of opinion on the subject, for Hartley is keen to see something tangible, whereas Stringer, who has more modern ideas, feels that bursaries to assist the education of boys in need would be a more worth-while memorial to the old boys of the school who had given their lives in the war.

(William Mervyn as Dennis Stringer, M.A.)



Grimmitt: I caught Read bolting with his suitcase,
sir, trying to catch the 2.45 for London.

Read: Let go my arm, damn you.

(Denholm Elliott as the prefect, Grimmitt.)

(Right):

Read: I want to go home. I—I want to go home.

Read, who has been the butt of the other
boys, finds an understanding friend in the
new master, who is back from the war with
a fresh outlook on the problems of education.





Mrs. Hartley: I'm really dying for a drink. I've had Lady Tracy, all through speeches, telling me what a good school ^{latter} is.
It is Speech Day 1947, about three years later. Mrs. Hartley and Lynne pay a visit to Lorraine's study at The Cloisters



Lorraine: What are you doing now?

Grimmett: I'm in the City . . . shipping my father's firm.

Grimmett, who has grown into a self-important and rather obnoxious young man, looks in to pay his respects to the old school and Lorraine.



Lorraine: You must give more spare time to work, Read. That is, if you want to get on.

Read: We don't get any spare time, Sir.

Read, thanks to Lorraine's inspiration during the past three years, is now a well-spoken and keen young student eager to go up to Cambridge.



Lorraine: Then what did you come up here for?

Lynne: To look at the view from my nursery window . . . I still think of this room as my own, despite the fact that you've usurped it.

Lorraine, who has been in love with Lynne for a long time, asks her to marry him.



I will marry you, Lorry, and do you want to know why?

ae: Yes . . . please, yes.
Because I love you terribly.



Lorraine: Lynne's just said she'll marry me, Mrs. Hartley.

Mrs. Hartley is delighted at the news, though she knows that, largely on account of the Read experiment, Lorraine and Lynne's father do not see eye to eye



Hartley: This is the big scandal, Lorraine, that never happened at Saintb

Nigel and Lynne, who feared at first that Hartley's rage was due to the news of their engagement, learn that a girl from the neighbouring school is in trouble. Read has been seen out of bounds with her and the housemaster is only too ready to believe the worst of the boy.



Lorraine: Did you know my son wanted to go to Cambridge?

Mr. Read: Yes, he's been talking about it.

Read's parents pay a visit to the school and Lorraine broaches the subject of sending him to Cambridge. He finds that the Reids are ambitious for their son and are even willing to sell their life insurance. At the moment, however, unknown to them, the whole question of the boy's future hangs on the outcome of an enquiry at the girls' school.

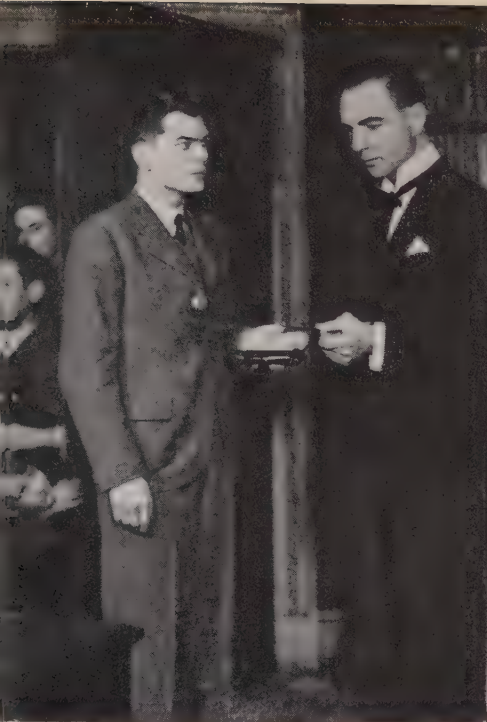
(Duncan Lewis as Mr. Read and Joan Hickox as Mrs. Read.)



Read: Mother.

Mrs. Read: He's looking well.

Read, also unaware of the scandal in which he is implicated, is delighted to see his parents and greets them with unaffected pleasure. Meanwhile the Headmistress of the girls' school telephones Mr. Hartley to inform him that the culprit is not Read but Grimmett, so that Read's future remains uncomplicated.



ad: On behalf of the undersigned—I
ould like to present this to you, sir, in
n of—anyway, sir, it's two pipes.
They're Dunhills.

the last night of term Lorraine,
has decided to leave the
pool, is presented with a parting
! Mr. Hartley is retiring and
i of late become more reconciled
Lorraine's point of view, so
ch so that he was most eager
Lorraine to take his place as
housemaster.

ve right):

. Hartley: You are just a silly boy.
rtley throws discretion to the
ads on this his last night, and
as his boys for a riotous free-
all in the dormitory, much to
the amusement of his wife.

raine: Oh, by the way—Do I have
to return the pipes?

d: No, sir . . . you can have them—
as a wedding present.

raine is at last made to see that
rtley really does want him to
e over the House, and finally
es to do so, much to the
ght of Read. The closing
moments of the play.



Propaganda Problems

by ERIC JOHNS

ROBERT Flemyng's dressing room at the Criterion is like a debating chamber. After seeing his performance as the young public school-master in *The Guinea-Pig* friends and admirers slip round and invariably start a discussion on the theme of this play, which depicts the effect of public school education on the son of a humble tradesman.

The room buzzes with questions. Why is *The Guinea-Pig* so successful that an extra matinee has to be given on Thursdays? Is it because it deals with a serious educational theme? Does the author think that all boys, irrespective of birth, should attend public schools? Does he think public schools turn out a stereotyped product, and are therefore bad for lower-class boys with individualistic minds? What is the real moral of the play?

As Robert Flemyng plays the up-to-date young master, Nigel Lorraine, he is regarded as an authority and expected to throw some light on it. He summed up the situation very well the other night by saying *The Guinea-Pig* is a success because, in the first place, it is good theatre, and in the second place, it is a problem play, rather than a propaganda play.

"The first essential of any play is that it should be good theatre," he continued. "It should pass an evening for us pleasantly, as did the Lunts in *Love in Idleness*. It was the first play I saw on returning to England after six years abroad in the Army. This can hardly be called a propaganda play, but I thought it a perfect evening in the theatre, with professional production, acting and playwriting at its peak.

"A play with a thought-provoking theme is usually more interesting than a mere photographic reproduction of life and types we know. It is fun to be able to say in the interval, 'Isn't she the image of Auntie Maud—always fussing about cutting too much bread and butter?' But unless your companion also happens to know Auntie Maud, such observations are not going to be of much interest to him. On the other hand, if the play has a deeper content and discusses a broader theme, such as the nationalisation of the medical profession, it serves as a basis for the most interesting discussion afterwards, even between strangers.

"The secret of such a play lies not in drawing hard and fast conclusions for you, but in simply stimulating your thought. That is why *The Guinea-Pig* holds your interest long after you have left the theatre. The author does not lay down the law and tell you what he feels you ought to believe. He merely shows the effect of public

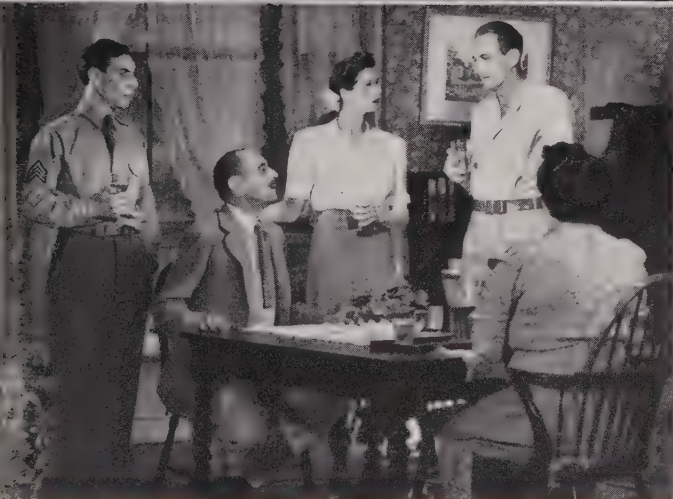
school education on young Read, and leaves you to decide whether you think it good or bad.

"The propaganda play preaches. It is dogmatic, telling you what you ought to do and what you ought to think. The problem play simply sets you thinking and stimulates your imagination. Whenever I think of propaganda plays I recall 'The Kitchen Front' feature of the radio in the dark days of the war. The Ministry of Food reviewed the nation's pantry. They decided sugar was scarce and had to be cut; dried eggs were plentiful and their use had to be encouraged. Very cleverly they engaged people like Mabel Constanduros and Elsie and Doris Waters to come to the microphone and play in little sketches, during which they would supply the housewife with recipes for cakes that could be made without sugar, and omelettes that could be made with dried eggs. Their art was exploited as pure propaganda. The script they used had no intrinsic value, beyond being a sermon to discourage the use of sugar and to promote the consumption of dried eggs. The features were brightly performed and the artists are to be congratulated on their excellent contribution to the war effort. On a music-hall stage such sketches would not last a week. They are not works of art; and as Dame Sybil Thorndike said only a few days ago, 'A propaganda play is a bore unless it is a work of art.'

"Plays may provoke as much discussion as you like, but they must never simply preach a doctrine. Such works date too quickly to become classics, and seldom have universal appeal. After the Russian Revolution the theatre was freely used in Soviet Russia to eulogise the new regime and show how preferable it was in every way to the old Tsarist yoke. Illiterate peasants began to appreciate their lot when they saw plays contrasting new days of freedom with the old days of serfdom.

"Such plays were instruments of propaganda and not works of art, or at least one of them would have come out of Russia and attained some degree of artistic success in London, Paris or New York. But in Western Europe and America we still mean Chekhov or Turgenev when we talk about the Russian theatre. No Soviet writer has gained universal recognition on the stage. *The Cherry Orchard*, *A Month in the Country* and *Three Sisters* are plays of atmosphere rather than plays with a theme, and are performed in one or other of the capitals every season because they are great works of art and will be in demand as long as a theatre exists in the world. A sermonising drama about the benefits of collective

(Continued on page 28)



A scene from Act I of Ronda Keane's *The Shouting Dies*, a play of American life, the Company of Four's opening production on October 5th, 1945. In the picture are *L. to R.*: Frederick Richter as Martin Kraus, Margaret Johnston as Susanna Willard, Joan Young as Amy Willard, and Walter Martin as Ed Willard. The producer was Murray Macdonald, with decor by Michael Weight.

Left The dramatic moment in Act II when it is discovered that Kurt is a German and not a Dane, and worse, that he had been an active Nazi. *Left*: John Slater as Hank Peters, American sergeant back from the war, and a rival of Kurt's for Susanna's affections. *Right*: Gerard Winze as Kurt Sigrist.

"The Shouting Dies"

The Company of Four

FOREMOST among post-war movements in the theatre in and around London is The Company of Four, which has taken over the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, with the laudable aim of encouraging new playwrights, actors, producers and designers. The first six productions, running four weeks each, have been interesting and varied and it is not surprising that The Company of Four have attracted splendid audiences, and inaugurated a new era of prosperity at Hammersmith's famous theatre.

Hugh Beaumont, Tyrone Guthrie, Nor-

man Higgins and Rudolf Bing are the "Four," with Murray Macdonald as most able Administrator. It was, indeed, the experience of Mr. Macdonald at the Garrison Theatre, Salisbury, where he found great enthusiasm for the theatre among young men and women in the Forces, who had been brought up on the films (many of them never having been in a theatre in their lives) that inspired him with the idea of creating a theatre on these lines. Scenes from the first six productions are contained in the following pages.

PICTURES BY ANGUS McBEAN



Cassandra: A miserable wretch, this menial! What do heralds think they are? The whole world hates the minions who wait on kings and princes.



Andromache: You Greeks, what un-Greek tortures you have devised.

"The Trojan Women"

F. Kinchin Smith's modern translation of Euripides' *The Trojan Women*, with Thornton Wilder's one-act play *The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden*, followed on November 8th. Marie Ney, making her first appearance in this country for six years, appeared as Hecuba (extreme right of both pictures above) and there were brilliant performances from Eileen Herlie as Andromache, Joy Harvey as Cassandra, Terry Morgan as Talthybius, Kathleen Hunt as Helen, Robert Marsden as Poseidon, and Andrew Laurence as Menelaus. The play was produced by Greta Douglas with decor by Michael Weight.



"The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden"

Garage Hand: Well, I guess you're all set now, lady.

This Thornton Wilder one-act gem proved a delightful foil to the sustained tragedy of *The Trojan Women*. No scenery was used and Eric Crozier produced. Mr. Wilder's lovable American family are seen in their car on their trip to the married daughter. Terry Morgan as the garage hand, Joan Young as Ma, Gabrielle Blunt as Caroline, Michael Newell as Arthur, and Alexander Archdale as Elmer.

“Spring 1600”



Emlyn Williams's play *Spring 1600* followed on December 10th. This was not a revival of the production presented at the Shaftesbury in 1934 but had been entirely rewritten by the author, only the original incidental music by Herbert Menges being retained. Andrew Cruikshank, making his return to the stage after five years in the Army, appeared as Richard Burbage in this delightful play about stage-folk of Shakespeare's time. The author directed the play and the decor was by Michael Weight. In the picture above are seen Jessica Spencer, Andrew Cruikshank and Helen Christie, and below Andrew Cruikshank, Edna Morris, Helen Burns, Cameron Miller and Peter Burton.





“Death of a Rat”

Yolan: I wouldn't mind a cigarette.

Wouterson: No, don't smoke. A feather might knock you into eternity.

A new work by the Dutch playwright, Jan de Hartog, was the next production on January 16th. This was a play of ideas, noteworthy for the splendid acting of the small cast. The play was produced by Murray Macdonald and an extraordinarily clever piece of stage decor was achieved by W. Stanley Moore. In this scene are *L. to R.:* Robert Harris as Wilts, Pamela Brown as Yolan and Alastair Sim as Wouterson.

“The Time of Your Life”

William Saroyan's play about a group of people who haunt a low-class saloon on the San Francisco water front was presented on February 14th. Mr. Saroyan's sometimes obscure types were admirably presented, and Walter Crisham, himself an American, deserted his usual medium, revue, to take the part of Joe, the young loafer-philosopher. *Right:* Eileen Herlie and Walter Crisham and *below* Prudence Hyman, Frederick Valk, Molly Gay, Arnold Marle, Irene Worth and Richard Nelson in two scenes from the play, which was produced by Peter Glenville with decor by Tanya Moisewitch.

(Pictures by Churton Fairman)





Pictures by Churton Fairman)

This delightful comedy by John Coates, the sixth production at the Lyric, Hammersmith, was an immediate success when it was produced on March 12th. The play is set in 1965 when the author envisages a country completely state-controlled, with bureaucracy run mad. In the picture above, Dorothy Lane, Joyce Linden, Nigel Patrick, Beella Sim and Wallas Eton are seen partaking of a vitamin breakfast in a chromium and plastic community flat, while (right) Hedley Briggs, a lively non-co-operative relic of the bad old days, has a passage of arms with Richard Wordsworth as the community Warden. The play was produced by Norman Marshall with decor by Joan Jefferson Farjeon.

“To-Morrow’s Child”



THE Company of Four plays usually reach the Lyric after a short provincial tour and the next production will be *The Thracian Horses* on May 7th. This play, a modern rendering of a classical theme, has been well received out of Town. Sebastian Shaw, Eileen Herlie and John Justin play the leading parts and the production is by Murray Macdonald.

(It is the desire of the Company of Four to encourage other developments at Hammersmith, and in this connection the programmes of poetry and music given by the Apollo Society have been unexpectedly suc-

cessful. The fourth of these Monday evening events took place on April 29th, when the readers were Edith Evans and Alec Guinness, with Angus Morrison as pianist. In previous programmes Michael Redgrave, Sybil Thorndike and Lewis Casson, and Peggy Ashcroft, Robert Harris and John Laurie have taken part. The reading of poetry aloud has lost its vogue of late but these recitals, which have been excellently planned and executed, have revealed that there is a ready audience for this unusual form of entertainment. The programmes are organised by Laurier Lister.



In the News

LEFT :

EMRYS JONES

A characteristic study of Emrys Jones, the clever young actor who gives such a brilliant performance as Sergeant McLachlen in *The Hasty Heart* at the Aldwych. The usual reactions of peace have not affected the popularity of this war play, which owes so much to the warm humanity of its characterisation and the splendid acting of the company, particularly that of Mr. Jones as the uncompromising Scot.

(Picture by Houston-Rogers)

BELOW :

ALAN WEBB

who has taken over with great success the part of Clive Brook in *The Years Between* at Wyndham's Theatre. This is Mr. Webb's first part since he left the Army, apart from a short spell in *Blithe Spirit*.

(Portrait by Alexander Bender)



John Vickers

MURIEL PAVLOW and HUGH WAKEFIELD in Terence Rattigan's *While the Sun Shines* at the Globe, one of London's longest runs, now past its 1,000th performance.



BY OUR
AMERICAN
CORRESPONDENT

E.

MAWBY GREEN

Scene from the Theatre Guild's production of Leonid Andreyev's *Who Gets Slapped*, in a new English version by Judith Guthrie. In the picture are, L-R: Bobby Barry (kneeling), Reinhold Schunzel, Dennis King, Susan Douglas, Wolfe Barzell, Bella Adler and Jerome Thor. (Picture by Vandamm Studio.)



Echoes from Broadway

THE New York Drama Critics' Circle annual meeting to select the best American and foreign play of the year resulted in a deadlock when no play garnered sufficient votes to make the simple majority necessary for an award. On the final ballot, *State of the Union*, by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, received seven votes; *Born Yesterday*, by Garson Kanin, five; *Dream Girl*, by Elmer Rice, one, and Harry Brown's short-lived *A Sound of Hunting* one. Four critics voted against giving an award. In the foreign division *Antigone*, adapted by Lewis Galantiere from the play by Jean Anouilh after Sophocles, collected five votes and Terence Rattigan's *O My Sister Mine* one. Here eleven critics voted no award.

A special citation went to Oscar Hammerstein 2nd and Richard Rodgers for their musical *Carousel* because its "various elements were charmingly and freshly com-

bined into something contributing an advance in the musical field." *Carousel* was not eligible for the "American" award since it is based on Ferenc Molnar's *Liliom*.

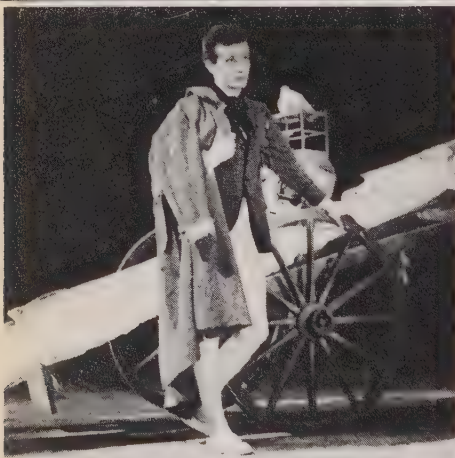
We had rather expected *State of the Union* to walk comfortably away with the award, but we would have had no misgivings had *Born Yesterday* or *Dream Girl* been picked out for this honour. While no one would claim that these are "great" plays, they are all stunningly designed comedies and worthy of being a "Best" of a season. London theatregoers will undoubtedly get a look at them eventually. Already Benn W. Levy is touching up *State of the Union* for British consumption and Constance Cummings will star in the role created over here by Ruth Hussey.

In spite of the five votes accorded *Antigone* as the best foreign play of the year (discussed in detail last month), the

(Continued on page 27)

French Ballet at the Adelphi

● The recently-formed Ballets des Champs Elysees, of Paris, received a real welcome when they opened their season on April 9th. This is the first foreign ballet company to visit us for many years. *Left*, Irène Skorik and Helene Sadovska in *Le Déjeuner sur L'herbe*; *centre, left*, Roland Petit in *Les Foyains*; *right*, Jean Babilée, and, *foot of page*, scene from *La Fiancée du Diable*, with decor by Jean-Denis Malcles. A full review of the season, which is presented by Jack Hylton under the patronage of H.E. the French Ambassador, M. Massigli, will be included next month.



ily reviewers were not over enthusiastic and in order to bolster the box-office receipts Catharine Cornell decided to alternate an old favourite, Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, drawing on several members of her *trigone* cast. This marks Miss Cornell's fourth appearance as *Candida*.

(Mr. Shaw's 1903 triangle in which the wonderfully feminine and tolerant *Candida* is called upon to choose between her much respected, sermonising husband, Morell, and the wisely sensitive adolescent poet, Marchbanks, proves again that in the right hands can be a striking play of warm wisdom and unflinching feeling. Miss Cornell is, of course, the ideal *Candida*, bringing a brilliant quality illuminating all the womanly virtues of this role. Wesley Addy makes Morell an earnest, energetic, silver-tongued preacher, omitting much of the smug and stiffness usually associated with this character. It is an interesting interpretation since it complements so well the shy intensity and fire that Marlon Brando injects in Marchbanks. This is young Brando's third stage appearance. In two short seasons he has climbed out of the knee breeches he wore in *I Remember Mama* into the long coats of Marchbanks to curl up at the feet of Miss Cornell. A remarkable achievement for one so young! Whenever Miss Cornell decides to revive *Candida*, Mildred Natwick seems to pop up out of nowhere to put herself behind that old clanging type-caster and suffer "Prossy's complaint." Prossy has become a portrayal of rare perfection. The grand surprise of this revival, however, is Cedric Hardwicke's superb

characterisation of Mr. Burgess, *Candida*'s father, the man who calls himself an ideal employer now that the law has made him pay his workers a living wage. Mr. Hardwicke's mischievous make-up and broad comic artistry blend to make his Mr. Burgess one of the funniest blokes to be seen on Broadway. Guthrie McClintic's direction is of the same high calibre that distinguishes the writing and the performances.

Twenty-four years ago the Theatre Guild scored one of its major triumphs when it produced Leonid Andreyev's theatrically effective *He Who Gets Slapped*. An attempt to duplicate this success was made when the Guild recently set up on Broadway Papa Briquet's circus in a new English version by Judith Guthrie, directed by Tyrone Guthrie and starring Dennis King in the title role originally created by the late Richard Bennett. No great outburst of enthusiasm or violent discussions greeted the play this time, rather just a moderate thank you and a certain detachment which viewed the play as an interesting specimen of the drama of the 20's.

The emphasis in the new version falls on the melodramatic story with the murky symbolism and pessimistic philosophy of negativism being mainly by-products. A sensitive man, wishing to escape from a cruel and odious world, joins a small French circus when his wife and best friend are unfaithful to him. He becomes a clown known as Funny—it was He in the original—and it is his duty to be slapped to amuse the audience. He finds the circus peopled by many unhappy, frustrated, mean and

(Continued overleaf)

Catharine Cornell
Mildred Natwick
in the revival
Bernard Shaw's
Candida, presented
Miss Cornell in
collaboration with
Albert Miller.



repulsive specimens. Count Mancini, the seedy and vile father of the young and naive bareback rider, Consuela, is about to marry her off to an old, wealthy roue, Baron Regnard. Being in love with Consuela and foreseeing a miserably future in store for her, Funny poisons her and then himself. It is this barest of outlines which emerges most clearly from the production. The all-important scene in which Funny's repentant friend, who has stolen his wife and his ideas, visits him at the circus and is told he need not fear being exposed for Funny has completely withdrawn from the world, barely comes to life; the lady lion tamer who wants desperately for her lions to love her is ill-conceived; and no conscious attempt is made to probe deeply into the emotions of the characters or to shed some light on the play's vague symbolism. It is as though all connected with the production suspected that the deeper they cut the less they would find.

Within the limitations of this interpretation, Tyrone Guthrie's staging is excellent. He has caught all the excitement of the circus, stressed the action, and with the aid of the Motley's atmospheric settings and lighting created some magnificent visual patterns. Dennis King's Funny is in keeping with the production design. He is bitter, philosophic, sardonic but only momentarily moving. John Abbott gives a detailed study of the revolting Count Mancini and the petite Susan Douglas, making her Broadway debut as Consuela, is lovely and innocent.

Now that the Guild is so flushed with funds and is having difficulty finding six manuscripts for production to fulfill their subscription obligations each season, the opportunity would seem to be ripe for this organisation to include such distinguished foreign plays as Leonov's *Orchards of Polouchansk*, Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Mouches* and Sean O'Casey's *Red Roses for Me*.

Oscar Karlweis, who scored a personal success as Jacobowsky in *Jacobowsky and the Colonel* found in A. B. Shiffrin's play *I Like it Here* a watered-down version of the same character called Willie Kringle. Willie is the freedom-loving refugee come to America. He secures a position as handyman in a henpecked professor's house and in three acts straightens out all the stock situations imaginable. Without Mr. Karlweis' comic talent, the play would not be around at this writing.

The quick departures of the month included *Little Brown Jug*, by Marie Baumer, which told how a queer handyman witnessed an accidental death and terrorised two women by threatening to accuse them of murder, and Jean and Walter Kerr's dramatisation of Franz Werfel's *The Song of Bernadette*, which found its audience had already been used up by three hours of Jennifer Jones in the film.

Propaganda Problems (Continued from page 18)

farming cannot be expected to hold the same interest outside the Soviet Union.

"Ibsen's *Ghosts* may be cited as a propaganda play, in view of the fact that it was played for troops during the 1914-18 war to warn them against the dangers of a promiscuous sex-life. Yet Ibsen's play is still a classic and will live on. The medical problem has been more or less solved, but we are still interested in the play on account of the mother, who is so tragically alive. Furthermore, it offers an actress, say even Duse's calibre, one of the grand opportunities of a lifetime. What modern dramatist has conceived a situation equal to that final curtain, with the son muttering to himself while his mother slowly thrusts her finger into her hair in dire realisation of what has happened?

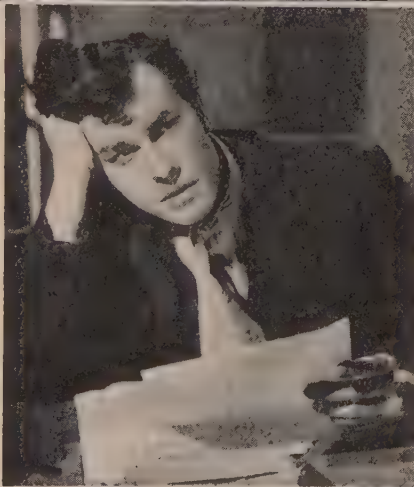
"Emlyn Williams' *The Corn is Green* cannot be called a propaganda play. It is an interesting human study of a young miner, helped to Oxford by a fairy godmother in the form of Miss Moffat. It is an arresting story, and many playgoers thought it gave Sybil Thorndike the greatest chance of her career. It might be a good thing if all miners had an opportunity to go to Oxford, but the author never expressed the sentiment in so many words.

"I am convinced the public like political plays. They are all for them, but have no time for dreary propaganda. Like Dame Sybil they consider it a bore. Before we opened at the Criterion with *The Guinea Pig* we toured some of the larger provincial towns. We had no big names in the casts and no one with a popular film reputation. In other words, we realised the play, and the play alone, was our draw. By Wednesday each week it succeeded in filling the theatre. On Monday and Tuesday people sampled it. They started thinking and discussing the theme with their friends, who filled the house for the remainder of the week, and before going home they often came round to the stage-door to argue a point or two with the cast.

"That tour fully convinced me of the existence of a vast public for thoughtful plays, but such plays must be good theatre. Any propaganda must be incidental to the play. *The Insect Play*, *Idiot's Delight* and *There Shall be no Night* can be classed as anti-war plays, but above all they are first-rate theatre. That is their most valuable quality. Their anti-war message is entirely by the way. It is the same with our play at the Criterion. I have no idea what the author really feels about the Fleming report and educational reform. But we all know he has written an interesting play concerning the conflict between the younger and the older generation of school-masters and between scholars drawn from the gentry and the proletariat."

The Corn is Green"

...ies from Warner Bros. film
 ...Emlyn Williams's famous play.
 ...s is one of Hollywood's best
 ...rts, and theatregoers who en-
 ...ed the stage version with
 ...fil Thorndike and Emlyn Wil-
 ...s will not be disappointed.
 ...the spirit of the play has
 ...h most faithfully captured.
 ...t: Rhys Williams as Mr.
 ...es, Nigel Bruce as The Squire,
 ...n Lorrington as Bessie Watty
 ...Mildred Dunnock as Miss
 ...iberry. Below: Bette Davis,
 ...gives a brilliant perfor-
 ...e as Miss Moffat, and John
 ...Dall as Morgan Evans.



•
 Seen
 on
 the
 Films
 •

"The Captive Heart"

...ael Redgrave
 ...re) in a scene from
 ...recent British film
 ...l on the lives of a
 ...o of men in a
 ...er-of-war camp.
 ...Redgrave's wife,
 ...ael Kempson, is
 ...in the film, and
 ...Radford and Mer-
 ...Johns are other
 ...known stage actors
 ...his moving film,
 ...also includes a
 ...er of talented new-
 ...comers.



Whispers from the Wings

BY
LOOKER ON



TONY GARNER

CHORUS boys show considerable courage by electing to join "the ranks," where they may so easily remain in anonymous obscurity for the duration of their theatrical career. Far from being assured, their future is often precarious to the point of bleakness. Unlike chorus girls, they lack the additional advantage of being able to exploit the stage as a shop window from which young men with an eye to matrimony may be tempted to make a selection.

As an habitu  of the exciting Sadler's Wells production of *The Bartered Bride*, I have become familiar with the work of individual chorus dancers, and with that of Tony Garner in particular. Last season this lively, Spanish-looking youth helped to make the Polka one of the high-spots of the evening. As I admired the precision of those intricate Czech steps I often wondered what the future held, not only for him, but for other lads of the corps de ballet. I recently managed to corner Tony in the Crush Bar at Covent Garden during an interval of *The Sleeping Beauty*. Like his friend Michael Somes he has had cartilage

trouble in his knee and is taking life fairly easily just now. It was an ideal opportunity to tackle him on the fate of the average chorus boy.

Tony has spent best part of four years dancing in opera, and though he has made success of his job, it seems that chorus work, whether in opera, ballet, revue, or musical comedy, is not a carefree existence.

"Only about ten per cent. of the chorus," Tony estimates, "manage to rise above the crowd to achieve a more individual position in the theatre. Some boys, with rather more than average ambition, decide to strike out on their own by teaming-up with colleagues as a music-hall turn or a cabaret act. Others prefer to try for small parts in the hope that larger ones will follow. They never forget that Jack Buchanan was once a chorus boy!"

"Boys who try to 'rise above it' must possess certain fundamental qualities. They must have personality, in the theatrical sense of the word. They must have pleasing appearance. They need a quick, receptive brain capable of estimating a producer's requirements and translating them into action. Finally, they must be reliable servants of the management—well-groomed, steady performers, always in the theatre on time, and never guilty of fooling on the stage.

"Boys left in the ranks can manage to make a fairly comfortable living if ready to work hard and accept jobs when they are offered. They cannot afford to turn down tours because it is more congenial to stay permanently in London. They must be prepared to play in road shows from time to time.

"Touring has its disadvantages, of course. The boy who has to support himself entirely on his weekly wage cannot consider retaining a home in London as well as paying for 'digs' en route. His weekly earnings would not permit such extravagance. The boy without parents or friends to use as a London anchorage has to be content with living a vagabond life, surrounded by few portable personal possessions in other people's houses.

(Continued on page facing)

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A provincial tour offers considerable sure for outside interests, as the chorus is only required at the theatre during playing time of the show. Dancers in corps de ballet, on the other hand, are so lucky. To keep in training they are required to attend a daily class of three hours with the ballet mistress. Boys who manage to retain their looks and vitality can eke out their chorus career until they are about forty. Apart from the possibility of their style becoming dated, there is a danger of their age becoming noticeable if they are called upon to work by side with youngsters still in their teens.

When retirement becomes inevitable, owing to youth knocking too loudly on the door, the ex-chorus boy may get a job as assistant stage manager in a musical show; teacher in a dramatic school specialising in the preparation of students for musical comedy; or as dance producer for touring troupes which are often little more than faint copies of former West-End successes. These who drift out of the theatre sometimes manage to make both ends meet by doing regular crowd work in films, or by modelling for photographers, painters and sculptors. But one has to face the fact that these boys have failed in their ambition. One lives such a life from choice. They could have preferred to follow Jack Hyanan's footsteps to stardom.

"There is a great deal of truth in the Herrick lyric about gathering rosebuds. The chorus boy with a business head is quick to seize the first opportunity for advancement, so that he is out of the ranks and fairly well established in show business by the time the years begin to take toll of his looks. Unfortunately, any job in the theatre is a gamble, and one cannot be certain that the opportunity will arise to be snatched!"

New Shows of the Month (Continued)

"Patricia's Seven Houses"

ANOTHER banned play. A note on the programme states that the idea evolved from somebody saying that the English "deal with the world like a lovable English spinster who has inherited a dozen brotels", and holds out the promise, "You will see how well the analogy works out." Rene Ray, in Act I, is all that a novelist tries in ten chapters to put before his readers as a lovable English Spinster. The sample of her inheritance in Marigold Taylor's decor is sufficiently exotic to leave no doubt of its intentions. Now for the analogy: what does Miss English do? Does she endeavour to cleanse the Augean stable with her pencil and note-book? She certainly makes a seemingly determined beginning but, just when we are getting

(Continued overleaf)

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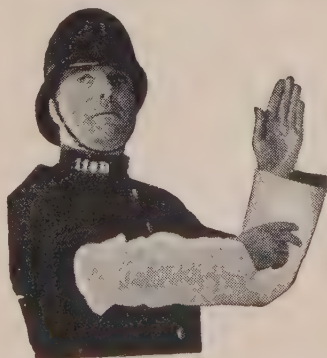
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roused to an intelligent interest in the sociological problem and the economic and political disturbance that threaten upon any foreigner tampering with it, the basis of the play is removed to the familiar ground of romantic melodrama, for, believe it or not, Miss English has fallen in love with the first educated American to enter the house—this within half an hour of her arrival. Act II, four weeks later, reveals Miss English transformed to something like a musical comedy star, such is the power of "lurve," and her attention is soon fully occupied in the plight of her fiancé, who is under arrest on a framed-up charge of murdering a money-lender. What follows is good theatre enough.

Of the acting, praise must go to Rene Ray, who is delightful in Act I and always good to watch after her so thorough transformation; to Peter Illing for a fascinating study of the local Mussolini; to Gerald Kempinski for two superb cameos; to Milo Sperber for a clever presentation of a corrupt and rather eccentric legal authority intimidated by the all-powerful shadow of the "Boss"; and to Meriel Moore for a great piece of acting which held attention when the play was really over. H.G.M.

"Here Come the Boys"

THE master hand of producer Jack Hulbert is everywhere apparent in this swift moving revue, and whenever Bobby Howes and Jack Hulbert are on the stage the entertainment is 100 per cent. But in places the show seems thin, and one sensed a lack of leading ladies, for in addition to the two stars, the Rhythm Brothers also are outstanding. Maybe the several quite clever young ladies did not get full opportunities. Eunice Crowther, Marie Sellar, Elsa Tee, dancer Natasha Sokolova and singer Leni Lynn are certainly talented as well as decorative.

Together and individually Bobby Howes and Jack Hulbert are brilliantly funny. Both also have their serious moments; Howes in a nostalgic number, "It All Adds Up to You," and Hulbert as a faithful old city clerk in "Flowers from East Croydon." Bobby Howes is in fine bucolic form as Mr. Daisy, the oldest inhabitant, and as a matelot in a typical Howes number, "Wavy Navy Joe." Jack Hulbert is irresistible as a present-day builder in "A Builder is a Very Busy Man" and as Lopez in the gay and colourful "Mexico" number.

Together these two are inimitable. Nothing could be funnier than their antics as quick-change male and female hotel staff.

With its Manning Sherwin music, lyrics by Harold Purcell and sketches by Max Kester, not to mention the new Delicolor stage lighting (about which more next month), the show should prove a popular addition to London's current musical attractions. F.S.

Sadler's Wells Opera-Ballet

THE recent formation of a second company was an important occasion for Sadler's Wells, and in the youthful Ann Heaton the evening revealed at least on starlet of golden promise. The bright and expressive grace of this child's dancing was noticeable throughout, and only the corps-de-ballet, in an otherwise colourless *Pro menade*, showed comparable personality. In Andrée Howard's new ballet, *Assemblée Ball*, the corps-de-ballet also shone in dances excellently arranged to suit a young company. In freshness of invention this is much ahead of some of Andrée Howard's recent work and she has charmingly fitted June Brae's fragile elegance in the leading rôle. The pale translucent radiance of this dancer gives this ballet its rare quality; the chief lack in the dance is of any emotion that can transform the ballet into something more than a light *divertissement*. The endless class technicalities and scarlet costume of the Master of Ceremonies also cut distractingly across the dance and colour scheme; there is a fussiness here, and need for repose, and though Les Kersley danced valiantly he must really point his toe and straighten his knee. Claude Newman had the wittier rôle and Bizet's Symphony in C, excellently played by the orchestra, proved blithely danceable.

London Archives of the Dance

THE above organisation, which has the admirable aim of establishing a museum of the dance in London similar to those in Paris and New York, presented their second programme of ballet films, with comments by Mme. Rambert, at Caxton Hall in March. The programme was a little long but of considerable historic interest, though perhaps Markova, at least, would question the value of recording one of her earliest performances of *Swan Lake*, when magnificent from the waist down, her head and arm positions still left so much to be desired. A glimpse of Spessivitseva in *Giselle*, a fine technical study of Toumanova in class, and some snatches of the de Basil company in *Aurora's Wedding* (with Baronova shining particularly in the *pas de deux* and a Three Ivans which rather sadly emphasised the weakness of our own) headed the "curios," and some Polish dances against lovely rural backgrounds, brilliant Russian folk dances and Ulanova in *Swan Lake* completed the programme. Unfortunately the speed at which the films were screened made it difficult to judge the true pace of the dancers. The most crying need of English dancers and ballet students at the moment is for a library where historic books on ballet, now unobtainable or too expensive to buy, can be read, and one hopes the Archives will make this their first aim. A.W.

Time on the Wing

"Time, as he passes us,
has a dove's wing"—
so wrote the poet: but
many women, looking
into their glass, have
thought of Time
simply as an enemy to
their youth and beauty.
But Time holds no



errors for the woman who knows how to protect her beauty. Truly,
it seems that Time brushes these women with a dove's gentle wing in
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Amateur Stage

WRITING in the Spring issue of *The Youth Leader* (1/-) Mr. Stuart Ready from his considerable experience offers some advice to young people considering amateur stage work. As the vastly numerous youth clubs and organisations are the most fertile source of supply for the amateur stage of the future, it is important that boys and girls in their earliest acquaintance with the stage should appreciate what the theatre demands.

Deprecating a happy-go-lucky skylarking attitude by young people to Drama, Mr. Ready puts his emphasis on choice of play and choice of producer. Shaftesbury Avenue is not the whole of the theatre. In search of good or worthwhile plays his admirable advice is to read plays, read them constantly and with a view to testing their production value. Reading then before an audience develops not only actors and actresses, but trains the sense of play selection and widens public response.

Some may not go all the way with Mr. Ready when he says that the producer is eighty per cent of the show. There can be no quarrel with his dictum that the producer "must be able to coach, to show by illustration the effect he desires to make; he must be one who can get the best out of everyone and one who can put something like the best into what is left." Remember, it is drama in youth clubs he is considering.

* * *

The Playmakers, of Ealing, after their success at Toynbee Hall Finals, where they won with *Mr. Sampson*, are continuing their productions in various areas, this being a group of travelling players. Amongst the plays performed at time to time are *Prelude and Fugue*, *Villa for Sale*, *How He Lied To Her Husband*, *Hindle Wakes* is in rehearsal, and a new development is a series of occasional lectures. Mr. James Laver will speak to the Playmakers in the autumn on "The Decor of Drama."

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quiries for the Playmakers should be addressed to Miss E. Bishop at 44, Cherington Road, Hanwell, W.7.

True Lovers' Knot, the play in two acts by Gerald Millar, with music by Claude Gillingham, which The Taverners are touring at various public houses in the London area, was written just before the war for performance before a large assembly of hop-pickers in Kent. It is a period play of a squire's son and servant maid. Staged very simply, its naive book is strengthened by lyrics of first-class quality, so song and dance are the making of the show. The Taverners are refreshingly rich in men of good voices, whose confidence and zest in their songs keep the play bowling along. At a tavern in March, an indoor audience seemed a little sophisticated in its response, but the play as a whole, staged in the Taverners "style" seems to cry out for the open air.

The Valley of Ajalon"

PRODUCED by David Monger at the Gateway Theatre, Notting Hill, this was the first production of the British Plays Society, which has the admirable aim of presenting new plays by unknown authors whose work deserves a hearing. *The Valley of Ajalon* was chosen from 500 plays which the Society received to open their season, and although a first play it shows a truly dramatic sense of character and dialogue. Unfortunately it loses its direction half-way, the centre of interest swivels too uncertainly between a Welsh parson turned Army Chaplain with a vision of a new spiritual race of mankind, and a ship's surgeon wracked by the psychological problem of claustrophobia. In the real dramatic crisis, the performance is a major operation by the surgeon in spite of his mental obsession is passed early in the second act: the later scene in the house in Singapore courtesan merely sidetracks the ending is unconvincing miracle. But while he keeps to realistic male psychology in the cabin of a troopship the author shows his natural talent for the theatre which at moments recalls *Journey's End*, and the casting of an almost entirely male cast, headed by Gordon Court as the surgeon (a remarkable performance) and Marcus Insley as the padre, was of an all-round excellence unusual in these times.

A.W.

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